

species are also documented from the valley, including the black-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*), the magnolia warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*), and the alder flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*).

Like Long Hope Valley, Grandfather Mountain is important for populations of the saw-whet owl and the Carolina northern flying squirrel. It also has many other rare animal species, though only a few are known from the Watauga County part of Grandfather Mountain. These include the Special Concern Weller's salamander (*Plethodon welleri*) and the magnolia warbler .

The county also contains aquatic habitats that are significant for rare animals. The hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*), a Special Concern species and also a Federal Species of Concern, has been documented repeatedly from the Watauga River. Another aquatic site of high animal significance is the South Fork of the New River, for its endemic fishes and other rare species. The South Fork New River Aquatic Habitat supports a total of 16 rare species of fishes, mollusks, aquatic invertebrates, dragonflies, and a beetle. However, only five rare species are documented from the aquatic site in Watauga County: the Kanawha minnow (*Phenacobius teretulus*), a Special Concern/Federal Species of Concern species; the Significantly Rare tonguetied minnow (*Exoglossum laurae*) and Kanawha darter (*Etheostoma kanawhae*); the State Endangered green floater (*Lasmigona subviridis*), a bivalve that is also a Federal Species of Concern; and the seep mudalia (*Leptoxis dilatata*), a State Threatened gastropod.

Rare species of open habitats and forest edges are also present, such as the Significantly Rare the Appalachian cottontail (*Sylvilagus obscurus*), the savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), and the vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*), all known from high pastures near Rich Mountain Bald and Snake Mountain.

Many records of rare animal species from Watauga County are very vague and should be sought in the future. These include the Allegheny woodrat (*Neotoma magister*), believed to be present in the escarpment region; the southern water shrew (*Sorex palustris punctulatus*), reported from "north of Boone"; land snails including the velvet covert (*Mesodon subpalliatum*), the high mountain supercoil (*Paravitrea andrewsae*), and the bidentate dome (*Ventridens coelaxis*); and butterflies including the green comma (*Polygonia faunus*), hickory hairstreak (*Satyrium caryaevorum*), and Edward's hairstreak (*Satyrium edwardsii*).

The rare animals of Watauga County occur in various habitat types, but densely-forested, unfragmented areas comprise the majority of the records documenting them. Such areas also support a more common, but diverse, fauna of birds, salamanders, and other species of forest interior habitats. Interior forest habitats are also favored by large mammals such as black bears, which are known to be occasional at Long Hope Valley and Grandfather Mountain. Habitats (*Ursus americanus*) that are even more removed from civilization exist in the escarpment area, which could be an important corridor area for movements of large mammals such as bears.